

HACKNEY HECKLER

TAKING THINGS ONE STEP FURTHER

FREE

No. 8, May 1991

BUG ALERT!

COCKROACHES RIFE IN HACKNEY

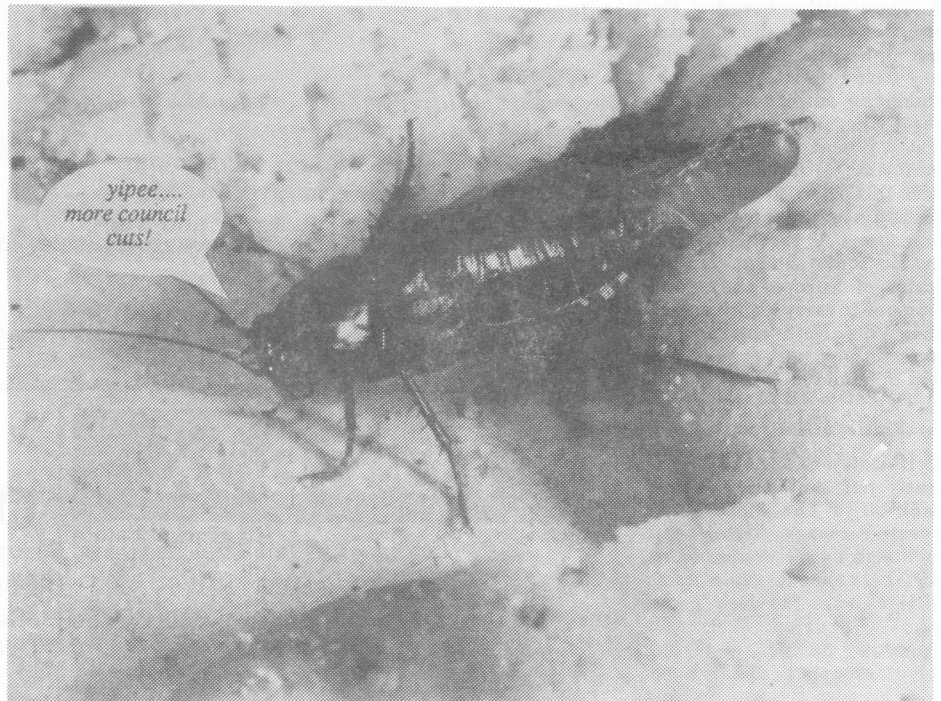
All across the borough creepy crawly cockroaches are causing horror for council tenants. Coming out in the dead of night from nooks and crannies in walls and under floorboards, devouring any food in sight and leaving their sickly sweet smell wherever they crawl. Some tenants have collected them by the bag full to prove to sceptical council officers of their abundance.

IT'S BUGGING

Why is it Hackney and not Hampstead these bugs choose to bug we ask? The answer's plain — sweeping cuts in services, from rubbish collection through to general maintenance are fast turning our estates into slums: a cockroaches' paradise.

The foolish and pathetic bunch of incompetents who are running our council don't have a clue what it's like trying to get the most basic of repairs done to our homes. Not surprising really when the majority of them don't live on estates but own their own homes on the poshest streets in the borough.

Cockroaches may be a problem but they don't bug as half as much as a council so spineless and corrupt as Hackney's got. With their readiness to impose the Poll Tax without a whimper leading to huge cuts in services, they've abandoned any pretence of being "the caring council". Caring to them means keeping their



Oxford Dictionary: (n) scavengers by nature, cockroaches are a threat to health because of their predilection for drains, sewers and rubbish. They inevitably foul more food than they eat, leaving a trail of excreta and regurgitated material.

jobs, balancing the books and toeing the Tory line.

RENT STRIKE NOW!

But people aren't being conned so easily. Thousands of tenants are already refusing to pay rent because of inefficient services. This could be extended to an organised rent strike to unite all those who are really sick to death of the council's mismanagement.

Woodberry Down tenants had the right idea when after years of living without a decent rubbish collection, they got together for a mass dump of rubbish right outside their area hous-

ing office. We'd like to suggest a councillors' front garden next time!

A council tenant in Brent who had cockroaches took her council to court and got over £5000 of rent arrears dismissed, setting a legal precedent to anyone with a similar problem to do the same.

But in the short term we suggest anyone who has problems with vermin or pests such as cockroaches, slip them in an envelope or parcel and post them off to our present Chair of Housing, Linda Hibberd, for inspection. She lives at the swanky 6 Oakfield Lodge, 37 Kenninghall Road, E5 which, as you can guess, is a far cry from a council flat in Hackney.

NEWS

COUNCIL COOKS BOOKS

● Hubble bubble, toil and trouble! The council embark on their audit this month after being forced to do so by the ombudsman. After three years of creative accounting, McCafferty and Co. will need copious amounts of whitewash to cover their tracks and we eagerly await the lame excuses, the stern denials and the realisation that public funds have mysteriously disappeared. The report will be ready later this month, so watch this space for further developments.

GESTAPO

● When Hitler invaded Poland, first thing he did was seize government records. These details gave him ready access to where the Jewish community were living, and many met their deaths quicker because these documents were available. Consider this before giving any information on the census or any state forms. As part of their policy for some kind of United States of Europe, they want everyone to carry identity cards after 1992. No doubt Poll Tax registrations and census had that in mind too.

PLAIN DAFT

● Hackney Council chiefs recently put the "loony" firmly back onto the "left" over women's issues. First, their campaign to get women to report harassment while using LBH Leisure Services' pools, gyms, libraries, etc....now there's nothing wrong there....trouble is it's all hypocrisy because the women (and men) actually working in Leisure Services are regularly harassed — and generally treated like shit — by LBH managers, to which the trendy "Women's Committee" turns a blind eye.

Then there's the Department of Technical and Construction Services' banning of patronising words like "love", "darling", etc. What nonsense! Offensiveness is just that, whatever the words used. Middle class managers can get away with it by hiding their sexism beneath "correct English" and slimy smiles. Meanwhile, LBH pretends it defends women — yet evicts homeless mothers!

QUEUE JUMP!

● Labour councillor Martin O'Connor was spotted recently jumping a bus queue. That's right, he was last one at the stop, first one on the bus. How's that for socialism?

FILL THE EMPTIES

In their well publicised campaign to rid the borough of squatters for 1992, McCafferty and Co. have recently shown yet again that when it serves their purposes, they're more than willing to bend and even break not only the law of the land, but also their own council policies.

Council documents leaked to us reveal the Director of Housing's written policy is to not evict those in "priority housing need", yet that's just what they did on 26th April in their dawn raid evictions on Holmleigh Road Estate, Stamford Hill. Of the 10 households evicted that day, the council had to rehouse 4 of them elsewhere. Further evictions were prevented only when construction union UCATT workers walked off, refusing to carry on doing the councils' dirty work.

Housing Services Chair Linda Hibberd later told the 'Hackney Gazette' "We have not evicted squatters who have high priorities, such as those with medical reasons or children, and those families that were evicted have all been rehoused". A fine piece of double-talk indeed Linda!

During these evictions, the whole estate was awakened at dawn and vanloads of cops stood around all day, so that the housing managers could feel they were safe from the angry residents surrounding them. How much did this fiasco

cost? Why didn't they let those people stay and spend the money making empty flats liveable? Hackney Council is still leaving 1400 of our flats unoccupied. We say NO EVICTIONS — FILL THE EMPTIES FIRST!

Know Your Rights — if you're threatened with eviction or need any other advice on squatting, you can phone the Advisory Service for Squatters, weekdays between 2pm and 6pm on 071-359 8814.



POSTBOX

Kingsmead Estate
Homerton E9

Dear Hackney Heckler,

After receiving the last two issues of the *Hackney Heckler*, I just had to write and tell you what a breath of fresh air it is. Like a lot of people, I was getting sick to death of Militant and the SWP claiming responsibility for beating the Poll Tax, closely followed by Labour Party stalwarts who feel we ought to vote Kinnock because he isn't a Tory. They all know in their hearts that it was the ordinary people that forced Major and Co. to radically alter their handiwork.

I just hope the momentum and thought stirred up by this lousy piece of legislation will carry on into other areas of social justice. I'm fed up with cuts in services, I'm fed up with bad administration and I'm fed up with lame excuses. Hackney is a dump, but it needn't be. The area is alive with talent, it has a network of people committed to making things better and, if you don't mind me saying so, it has a voice in the form of your paper. You are the only people who haven't tried to tell me it was all your idea, and I appreciate that honesty.

Yours Sincerely, Ray.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES?

Hackney Council likes to boast that it is a bastion of equal opportunities. But, as so often with this council, there is much difference between reality and rhetoric. So women's rights are upheld by this council? Like the right of women in the Labour Party who refuse to attend meetings where Tommy Sheppard (the Deputy Leader) is present due to his sexual harassment?

And the right of women to have nursery places for their kids? The Victorian Grove nursery (60 places) has been closed; the Ann Taylor Centre (50 places) has not been opened — yet the queue on the waiting list for nursery places is two and a half years long! On top of this, the fees at the councils' workplace nursery are going up by an average of 75%. This shouldn't bother the Chief Executive of the Council, Gerry White, who has one of the precious 50 places — he's only on a mere £60,000+ a year.

This council is run for the benefit of its careerist councillors and greedy fat cat managers. Workers and residents are at the bottom of the pile and they don't give a toss about us. We've got little to lose... they've got everything — how about kicking them out for starters?

VIRGIN BIRTH

A curious thing happened in March. For a few days, every time the news was on and in every newspaper, we had the likes of Dame Jill Knight practically encouraging unmarried women to have sex — unprotected sex at that.

The fuss was about a single woman in her thirties, who had gone to the London Hospital in Whitechapel and asked for artificial insemination so she could have a child alone. This Hackney woman was not only unmarried, but celibate. As the mainstream media dubbed the episode — there was to be a virgin birth.

The issue was her virginity, but as a Birmingham fertility clinic doctor summed it up, "Are virgins something special? It's as if there's something wrong with being a virgin!"

For most women, the state of virginity is not a big thing. Our lives don't become earth-shatteringly different after our first sexual event. Women still have to do most of the housework, control their fertility, and work for two-thirds of the money men get, whatever's going on in the bedroom or the car or cinema. But this society tells men that virginity is the



Is she a virgin?

physical equivalent of being brand new, and along with all the other trappings of consumer society, is a highly desirable object to possess.

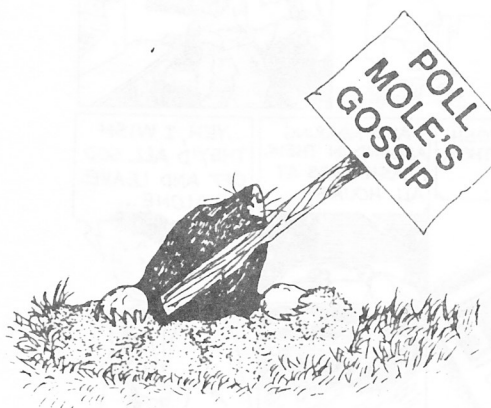
COLD PRICKS

The heart of the matter was that

men were being hit where it hurts — made redundant. This feeling was whipped up by the papers, like in the *Daily Mail's* article on production line babies without men getting a look in. But a virgin birth wasn't quite what was going on: there are no pregnancies without male involvement, even if through the cold pricks of hospital syringes. That apparent lack of men having full-blown sex was what was getting them hot under the collar!

The controversy linked sex with a man to being essential for a woman to be a good mother. Alongside lesbians, single celibate women wanting children were called irresponsible, inadequate and selfish — exactly the labels the media usually lavishes on single mothers by 'natural insemination. These so-called irresponsible potential mothers had clearly thought about the consequences of their actions. Yet again, women appearing to make rational decisions about their own bodies threw the media into panic.

We believe that a child should be wanted, have a secure home and be loved — but that none of these things have anything to do with a person's sexual activity.



So they've scrapped the Poll Tax. It's a great victory for us.

It's something to celebrate — and it's always a good laugh seeing politicians get stuffed. But we've still got the bills, the cuts and other problems. We should take heart from the Poll Tax and learn some lessons: basically, we don't have to take crap. We can fight it and win! So stuff the Poll Tax and the cuts — we want good local services based on our needs.

Latest leaks from the council's Poll Tax Office (it makes a sieve look se-

cure!) are that 33% haven't paid a penny of the Poll Tax and only 65% of the total has been collected. The geniuses who run this council said 95% would be collected — just goes to show what planet they're living on!

Bailiffs Rayner Ferrar have pulled out of Hackney, claiming details on the Poll Tax register are 80% incorrect, making it impossible to collect any debts. But the truth is Rayner Ferrar were driven out of Hackney by local people. Since they started demanding money with menaces, they have found the resistance here too much to handle. They have been picketed, followed, threatened; physically attacked and their cars have been vandalised. Dogs have been set on them, baseball bats waved at them and groin injuries issued. Since saying bye-bye to Rayner Ferrar, Hackney Council confirm they intend replacing them. Meanwhile, we must remember tactics used on these parasites and maybe we should practise our new found skills on councillors or even McRat himself!

● *Hackney Heckler* is a bi-monthly, free news-sheet produced by the HACKNEY SOLIDARITY GROUP.

● We all live or work in the borough and are sick of what we see around us. That's the aim of the *Heckler*: to encourage struggle for a decent life for all. We welcome contributions, donations, reports and help with distribution (we currently get rid of 10,000).

● What's happening on your estate? Which councillors are corrupt? Who's the worst boss in Hackney?

● Write to us at *Hackney Heckler*, c/o PO Box 824, London, N1 9DL. Our next issue will be July 1991.



TALKING 'BOUT LOVE



Too often in this world we forget to talk about love. We are surrounded and swamped by pressures that drive us into depression and frustration.

Good times

But it is good to remember why we are actually here, what is the point of our existence. We're not here to be obedient workers and quiet consumers. We're here to have a good time, to enjoy ourselves, to have a laugh, to have a smile. Basically, our lives should be about pleasure not pain!

Of course, this is denied by those who stand above us. As far as they're concerned, we're noth-

ing more than workers and consumers — and occasionally soldiers to die in their wars. And their idea of pleasure is always at someone else's expense because they want to ensure that we remain divided... and so ruled!

But there is a different reality to this. There's the reality of the helping hand, the friendly smile, the shared laugh, the warmth of human companionship. This is the reality that we want and it's a reality that we see glimpses of all the time in our daily lives.

Real enemies

Often, struggling together helps to bring this reality out. Artificial divisions disappear as we

realise that our basic interests are the same — and we realise who our real enemies are. We talk to each other a lot more and the crap that normally fills our lives is seen as being utterly irrelevant.

But this doesn't mean that we just wait for a struggle. We've got to start now. We've got to fight for our reality against theirs. We've got to free our immense abilities from the chains imposed on us.

All of this might sound weird — but look at it realistically. We have the potential to completely change the way we live, to replace hate with love, fear with care: we've got nothing to lose but our chains!

Breaking Free: The Adventures of Tintin



● To be continued...

If you can't wait for the next instalment, send £2 to Attack International, BM 6577, London WC1N 3xx, for the full-length cartoon book.

This news-sheet is produced by HACKNEY SOLIDARITY GROUP